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Items for information: Round Table on Business Survey Frames

Round Table on Business Survey Frames

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Round Table on Business Survey Frames, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2008/1.
** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 4* (E/2007/24), chap. I.A.

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Report of the Round Table on Business Survey Frames

1. The Round Table on Business Survey Frames is an international expert group under the umbrella of the Statistical Commission engaged in further development of business registers, survey frames and associated topics. Its final report to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session (E/CN.3/2006/23) contained information on the purpose and future direction of work of the Round Table. The present report focuses on the Round Table's most recent meeting and its outcome. Documents of this expert group are posted on the website http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/businessurvey/info/data/links.htm.

2. From 21 to 26 October 2007, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (DESTATIS) hosted the twentieth International Round Table on Business Survey Frames. The participants of the Round Table reached an agreement on changing the name of the forum to "Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers", in accordance with the practice of similar expert groups. The name of this expert group is also the name of one of the city groups on statistical methodologies. The title of the recent conference places emphasis on the long history of the group. Around 70 experts from 40 countries and international organizations exchanged their experiences in the methodological developments of business registers and discussed the possibilities of register-based business statistics.

3. On the first day, following tradition, the participating countries presented their progress reports. Each country described its problems and highlighted its key activities. Even new participants showcased their recent developments. The session was chaired by Peter Schmidt (DESTATIS, Germany).

4. The following sessions focused on different topics. Session 2, led by Michel Euriat (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, France), focused on the introduction of new business register tools or systems. Session 3 dealt with the classification system within business registers, chaired by Norbert Rainer (Statistics Austria).

5. Session 4 had a forward-looking perspective on the role of business registers in future statistical systems led by Andreas Lindner (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — OECD). Session 5 was split into two parallel sessions: the first, on benchmarking tools for business registers, led by Søren Andersen (Statistics Denmark) and business profiling, headed by Harrie van der Ven (Statistical Office of the European Communities — Eurostat); and the second, on entrepreneurship indicators, business demography, small and medium enterprise statistics, chaired by Rick Clayton (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics). Session 6 dealt with multinational groups, chaired by John Perry (Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

6. In the concluding session chaired by Peter Schmidt (DESTATIS, Germany) the future of the group was discussed. The conference agreed on changing the name of the expert group to "Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers". Beginning in 2008, the meetings will be held biannually, alternating with the joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, OECD and Eurostat (next joint meeting in 2009). OECD offered to host the meeting in 2008 and several potential hosts have shown their interest in holding the meeting in 2010.

7. Following the conference, a special workshop for developing countries, led by Gerhard Stock (DESTATIS, Germany), was offered. The workshop brought together 18 developing as well as developed countries to discuss the prospects of supporting other countries in their developments in the field of business registers and register-based business statistics. In the future, a session within the official agenda of the conference will deal with the needs of the countries starting up business registers and register-based business statistics.